FAMILY TRANSITION AT MARRIAGE

Marriage transfers the boy into the adult farm-owning man, the farm father into the old man; it brings the same changes for the women. Such changes are, of course, not abrupt; the groups which are substantially of the same age do not undergo disruption with the movement of one of their number from status of boy to that of man. But, on the other hand, there are general patterns of behavior which mark off these groupings in an informal manner, and which betray their origin in a social valuation of age differences.

The behavior of the different age groups is of the most intimate everyday kind, and consequently reflects those differentiations of status which are given formal and explicit recognition at marriage. Felt to be too natural a part of daily life to require explanation on the part of the farmers themselves, their behavior, nevertheless, is very easily remarked by the observer. In the ordinary countryman's house, for example, the man of the house and whatever older men may be present occupy chairs drawn up before the hearth. The hob by the fire belongs to the old couple by right. The younger people, the sons and daughters, sit behind them round the room on other chairs or on the window seats of the rectangular kitchen, which makes up the principal room of the usual small farmer's house. This arrangement shows itself best in the *cuaird* or visit, where the old men of the district drop in on neighbors and "friends" to sit around the hearth together passing the evenings of winter in conversation, singing, discussing the news, and telling the old stories of legend and folklore. At the *cuaird* younger men and women, if they attend, sit behind, usually leaving the center of the stage to the old men, and the children stand up behind in silent admiration. The younger men have their own pursuits, of course, though at present the divergence may be more marked than formerly. Lately, in Clare at least, they have taken to card playing on a gambling basis for stakes of small livestock in the country districts.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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571 they received their nicknames were of other sorts. Not even
517 farming occupied a large share of their conversation, keen as their rivalry in the matter often was while work was going on.

571 Taking these matters in order, the young men who met
517 at Roche's house met habitually there for card playing.
524 Roche's unmarried son, a man about thirty, was perhaps the central figure. His cousin, another Roche, was the brother of a young man just married, who took part in no *cuaird*. This cousin helped work his brother's farm. He was another central figure. The group that formed itself round them included most of the young men of Rynamona between the ages of twenty and thirty. They played the usual games of the Irish countryside, "forty-five" and "nap," often far into the night.

571 Roche's house was the more informal center. It took in
517 the younger men. But there was present in the community
525 a custom somewhat more organized, namely, the "gamble." As often as once a week a gamble is held in or near Rynamona. Each household, as its turn comes, throws open its doors to the card players. Admission, usually a shilling, is charged and goes toward defraying the expense of the supper of bread and tea for all and toward the prize. What is left after those charges are met belongs to the householder. Often this amount reaches a profitable figure, and, where the custom is firmly entrenched, a certain commercialism shows its head.

But the gamble is a sporting event. Teams, often formed of habitual associates in card playing, are pitted against one another in one form of the gamble. In another, individual high scorers win. The prize is usually a turkey or two geese, even a bonham (young pig), a side of bacon, or a calf. Elab-
555 orate rules and canons of honesty govern the play, the conduct of the players, and the obligation of the person offering the prize. Play is serious and intense, and the win-

ner of the prize can count himself a proud man, for to be known in the countryside as a "great gambler" is a coveted mark of shrewdness and skill.

The older men seldom attend the gambles. They are the province of the young. For the latter, they are a crystallization of the more informal card playing, such as that at Roche's house, already described, and they give the successful young men a prestige in the community ordinarily denied them. For in late years tournaments have sprung up covering whole sections of the county and it is a proud team which can bring back a five or ten pound district prize to its home community.

From the standpoint of an enumeration of those taking part in the gambles, too, the gambles show themselves to be such a crystallization. They bring into association on more definite occasions the groups, such as that at Roche's house, which meet habitually. They unite most of the young men, especially the more active among them, with a few of the older. But it is from the young men's world of habit that their union is created.

In Rynamona the young men who gathered nightly at Roche's house were the mainstays of the gambles. They could be counted upon to attend all of them. They played well and long, as they had learned the games among themselves. But they were not the only ones to come. Most of the slightly older men of what we shall call the intermediate *cuaird*, to be described later, such as John Quin, the newcomer to the old men's house already named, came from time to time, and there was always a sprinkling of young men, kinsfolk, and "friends" from near-by communities. It was only the members of the old men's house who stayed away. They alone had given up the habits of young men. To them the gamble was "codology."

Thus the first point of difference between the visiting habits of the old men and the young men, their lack of cen-

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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among them. Most of the young men between twenty-five and thirty-five met there. Through the winter months they met nearly every night, and played the usual games of the countryside, 'nap' and 'forty-five', often far into the wee hours. Other groups through the community met like these men and followed like pursuits with an equal zest.

At times, a custom somewhat more organized, the 'gamble', unites them all. It often brings in other young men across the lines separating community from community. As often as once a week, a gamble is held in or near Rynamona. Each household in its turn throws open its doors to the card-players. Admission, usually a shilling, goes to defraying the expense of a supper and tea for all and goes toward the prize.

For the gamble is one of many sporting events. The prize may be a turkey, or two geese, even a young pig or calf. Elaborate conventions govern the play, and the winner may count himself a proud man. To be known in the countryside, far and wide, as a 'great gambler' is a coveted distinction proving shrewdness and skill. The country dance is another such event, and still enlivens the countryside in the winter months, bringing the younger members of the communities together and providing honour for the distinguished. For 'a great dancer' is as widely known. In summer, hurley, the national game, has the same effect; and nowadays, through the nation-wide organization of the Gaelic